

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
**STAFF REPORT**  
**for**  
**July 20, 2006**  
**MEETING NO. 07-06**

<b>APPLICATION:</b>	HDC2006-00363
<b>ADDRESS:</b>	500 W. Montgomery Ave.
<b>ACCEPTED:</b>	June 28, 2006
<b>45 DAY LIMIT:</b>	August 12, 2006
<b>OWNER:</b>	Chestnut Lodge Properties, Inc.
<b>REQUEST:</b>	Approval for wall entry feature at W. Montgomery Avenue/Laird Street main entrance of Chestnut Lodge
<b>STAFF:</b>	Cindy Kebba

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval given the following findings: The proposed wall entry element conceptually replicates defining features (column shape and design, curved wall) of an earlier entry feature at this location while accommodating an altered streetscape created by the proposed widened road and separate pedestrian path. The applicant proposes a change in material from what was likely stucco on the earlier entry feature to a locally quarried stone. Stone is a material that is found on the property, throughout the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District, and on adjacent properties. Staff finds that Stoneyhurst stone is an appropriate alternative material for the entrance feature.

**DRAFT MOTION OF APPROVAL:**

Finding application HDC2006-00363, for a new entry wall on the Chestnut Lodge property which is within a historic district, in compliance with City of Rockville Guideline # 5: New Construction, and Secretary of Interior Standard #9, which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment" and Standard #10 which states "New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired", I move approval of the application with the condition that HDC Approval will be required for the signage on the wall.

**BACKGROUND:** The exploratory plan for Planned Residential Unit (PRU) development of the Chestnut Lodge site was reviewed by the HDC on July 21, 2005 and approved by the Mayor and Council on February 6, 2006. The applicant submitted the detailed application for the PRU on May 11, 2006. The HDC has review authority over any exterior alterations and new construction that occurs on the property within the West Montgomery Avenue and Rose Hill Farm Historic Districts, as well as opportunity to provide comments to the Planning Commission on changes that are proposed adjacent, abutting or confronting the historic districts.

**Previous Requests:**

PRU2005-00022	Exploratory application for residential development, approved by Mayor and Council 2/6/06
HDC2005-00336	Demolish Upper Cottage; re-construct Ice House, approved 7/21/05
Courtesy Reviews	Exploratory plan; exterior Lodge alterations and additions, 7/21/05
HDC2006-00360	Design and materials for new residential construction in Rose Hill Farm Historic District, approved 6/15/06
Courtesy Reviews	Detailed site plan; entrance wall feature; relocation of ice house; rehabilitation of Rose Hill Barn; rebuilding of Stable; rehabilitation and additions to Little Lodge and Main Lodge.

**Property Area:** 20.43 acres. The front 8 acres, including the Laird Street main entrance off West Montgomery Avenue, are in the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District.

**Development Standards:** Resolution 3-06 for PRU2005-00022 does not provide for any waivers for an entrance feature dimensions. Anything that is not specifically addressed in the resolution must follow zoning regulations by default. The entrance feature is considered to be a wall and must meet the zoning height requirements for fences/walls/hedges. As West Montgomery Avenue is classified as an arterial highway, the wall is limited to six feet in height at any point. (Typically fences are restricted to 42 inches in front yards *unless* it abuts an arterial highway.)

**City of Rockville Permits Required:**

HDC Certificate of Approval, Detailed Application approval by Planning Commission, City Forester approval to assure protection of mature trees in the area.

**SIGNIFICANCE:**

*Historic, archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.*

The proposed entry feature will be constructed in a style reminiscent of the earlier curved wall and piers that existed in this location and that are partially shown below in this undated photograph:



The new wall will be built to a larger scale that is more compatible with the wider vehicle and the added pedestrian entries.

**DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED PROJECT:** *The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area.*

The applicant's landscape architect, Sunny Scully, described the proposed entry feature design at the HDC Courtesy Review on June 15, 2006. She said that the old photograph shown above indicates that the earlier square piers that were once in this location were approximately 8 feet tall. In her design, she added an extra column on each side of the road and extended the length of the wall on each side. This was done because the scale of the entrance is going to be widened to accommodate three vehicle lanes and a separate pedestrian walkway. The Chestnut Lodge frontage along West Montgomery Avenue is approximately 500 feet and the proposed elongated design is in scale with that.

HDC comments on the design discussed at the June 2006 Courtesy review were as follow:

- The overall scale and size of the entrance wall is acceptable.
- Remove the balls on top of the pillars.
- Make the curve of the wall more pronounced to better replicate the original curve, even if the columns need to be taller to accomplish this.
- The applicant must provide support for the use of stone material as an appropriate material because the original material appears to have been stucco.
- Revised design should show lighting and sign details.

The applicant took into account comments and recommendations made by the HDC at the June 15, 2006 courtesy review in attempting to revise the wall design, specifically to increase the height of the pillars to achieve a more pronounced curve in the wall, which did result in a new design. However, according to the City's zoning ordinance, a fence, wall or hedge may not exceed six feet in height in the front yard of a property (or between the street line and the nearest line of a building or enclosed portion of a building) abutting an arterial highway. West Montgomery Avenue is considered an arterial highway. Therefore, the applicant is restricted to a maximum height of six feet for any portion of the wall. The applicant's consultant again revised the drawings to take the height restriction into account.

The balls on top of the pillars were replaced with concrete pyramidal caps that are more like the pillar caps that were on the earlier entry piers. The deepest portion of the proposed wall is now set back about 20.5 feet from the right-of-way. It is six feet in height at the peaks of the pillar caps of the interior four piers, and curves forward toward the road, while also reducing in height, to terminate in a third, shorter column on each side. Each side of the wall is 51 feet in length. Landscaping will fill in much the area between the base of the wall and the sidewalk and will help to reduce the visual scale of the wall.

The applicant proposes a single sign, attached to the wall between two columns on the west side of the entrance, and large enough to facilitate identification of the property for people driving along West Montgomery Avenue. West Montgomery Avenue is a much different road than in was in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century before there were cars. The volume and speed of traffic along West Montgomery today, combined with the intensified residential use of the property, requires a visible entrance and identification. The size, design, material, text, font, color and finish will be submitted in a Certificate of Approval application once the applicant finalizes these details. Entry walls will be lit with ground level uplights (no specifications submitted).

#### **MATERIALS:**

*The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.*

The applicant proposes the use of Stoneyhurst stone for the pillars and walls. The earlier feature appears, from the photograph, to have been faced with stucco. Stoneyhurst stone is a mica schist, quarried on River Road near Seven Locks Road in Cabin John. Stoneyhurst quarries provided stone for the C&O Canal, bridges and locks in the early 1800s, and was a popular facing material in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Montgomery County. The pillars will have concrete caps to match the wall veneer color.

Stone is a material that is found on and near the property, specifically the partially exposed stone rubble foundation of the Lodge and the stone-faced exterior of Rose Hill mansion, a house that retains a historical relationship with the Chestnut Lodge property. (Rose Hill mansion also an original stone foundation and square stone columns that support its porte cochere). Stone knee walls are found along West Montgomery Avenue in the historic district and decorative stone knee walls will be used throughout the new Chestnut Lodge development. Adjacent residential developments, including Rose Hill and Thirty Oaks, have used stone pillars and entrance features.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

*To any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the Commission deems to be pertinent, including items such as cost, tax credits, options, and alternative plans.*

Tax credits do not apply.

**COMPLIANCE WITH GUIDELINES:**

Staff finds that the proposed entry construction within the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District meets the City of Rockville Technical Guide for Exterior Alterations # 5, New Construction, Secretary of Interior Standard #9, which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment" and Standard #10 which states "New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired."

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Attachments: Certificate of Approval application HDC2006-00363, "Chestnut Lodge Stone Entrance Feature: Pictures of Stone Features On and Around Chestnut Lodge" as pictorial justification for the use of stone, Drawing 28 – pillar and wall details, Drawings 29 and 30, entrance feature elevations and plan, Entrance planting table.